

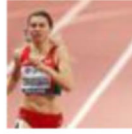
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NEW YORK

Ghislaine Maxwell makes first in-person NYC court appearance

By STEPHEN REX BROWN

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FEEDBACK

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In this courtroom sketch, Ghislaine Maxwell, far right, appears in Manhattan Federal court seated next to her attorney Bobbi C. Sternheim, second from left, along with her sister Usabel Maxwell, far left, during her arraignment on a superceding indictment, Friday, April 23, in New York. (Elizabeth Williams/AP)

FEEDBACK

A thin Ghislaine Maxwell made her first in-person court appearance Friday, nearly a year after her arrest for allegedly luring victims into Jeffrey Epstein's underage sex trafficking trap.

Maxwell, 59, walked stiffly into the Manhattan federal courtroom sporting a blue jail uniform. She had gray roots showing in her shoulder-length black hair. The British socialite, worth more than \$20 million, chatted with her defense attorneys and stared straight ahead, showing no obvious signs of the torture she claims to be enduring in the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn.

Maxwell pleaded not guilty to a [new charge of sex trafficking](#) a minor in the early 2000s. The British socialite is fighting with prosecutors on multiple fronts — though they were not addressed during the brief hearing.



FILE - Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell are pictured at Cipriani Wall Street on March 15, 2005 in New York City. (Patrick McMullan via Getty Image)

Maxwell's sister, Isabel, sat in the courtroom near an Epstein victim, Danielle Bensky.

“It’s painful, but it’s good too; it’s healing,” Bensky said after the hearing. “After not having a trial for Epstein this will provide closure for the victims.”

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Maxwell has complained about the conditions of her confinement, the start date of her trial and a 2016 meeting between lawyers for Epstein victims and prosecutors.

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Protestors display an anti-Jeffrey Epstein banner outside Manhattan Federal Court after Ghislaine Maxwell's court appearance Friday, April 23, in Manhattan, New York. (Barry Williams/for New York Daily News)

Maxwell says she’s being [held in solitary confinement](#) in the jail on the Sunset Park waterfront. Jail staff shine a light in her cell every 15 minutes overnight, preventing her from sleeping, she says. The food is often inedible and the water is filthy, her attorneys claim. She claims she’s lost weight and her hair is falling out. An MDC staffer allegedly [abused her](#) in one encounter, the details of which have not been revealed.

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“Ghislaine is in very, very difficult conditions none of us would wish on our worst enemy,” her attorney, David Oscar Markus, said outside of court. “She’s staying strong, she’s getting ready for trial. Ghislaine is looking forward to that trial and she’s looking forward to fighting, and she will fight.”

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Danielle Bensky (center) speaks to the media with attorneys Sigrid McCawley, left, and David Boies, after leaving Manhattan Federal Court Friday, April 23, in Manhattan, New York. (Barry Williams/for New York Daily News)

Maxwell is currently scheduled to face trial starting July 12 for procuring and grooming three underage Epstein victims in the mid-1990s, as well as trafficking a fourth

underage victim between 2001 and 2004. Her lawyers have asked for a delay until early next year. Prosecutors say they “strenuously” oppose the request.

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Judge Alison Nathan said she will soon rule on whether to postpone the start of trial. The judge recently ordered that Maxwell face a [second trial](#) on charges of lying under oath at a later date to be determined.

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Isabel Maxwell, Ghislaine Maxwell's sister, leaves Manhattan Federal Court Friday, April 23, in Manhattan, New York. (Barry Williams/for New York Daily News)

A legal battle is also brewing over a 2016 meeting — [first revealed by the Daily News](#) — between Manhattan federal prosecutors and attorneys for Epstein accusers. Sources told the Daily News that the victims' lawyers urged the office to open an investigation of Epstein and Maxwell. But the [request went nowhere](#).

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Isabel Maxwell, Ghislaine Maxwell's sister, right, leaves Manhattan Federal Court Friday, April 23, in New York. (Barry Williams/for New York Daily News)

Maxwell now cites that meeting as evidence that prosecutors and victims' lawyers were improperly in cahoots. Manhattan federal prosecutors say they opened an investigation of Epstein and Maxwell in response to investigative reporting by the Miami Herald in late 2018. Sources familiar with the meetings said victims' lawyers were frustrated by prosecutors' failure to take action following the outreach — rebutting Maxwell's claims of collusion.

"I don't believe there is any credible basis whatsoever to assert Ms. Maxwell is the victim. The media blitz the defendant is putting out, I don't believe it's fair to the real victims. I think it's highly undesirable," victims' attorney David Boies said.

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